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AUTHOR Merriam, Sharan
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ABSTRACT

This paper uses twentieth century American fictional literature to examine middle-age male development. Two historical periods, post World War I and post World War II, were chosen to provide a wide data base which could be analyzed over time. With seven American literature professors' aid, works of literary merit with a middle-aged male protagonist were selected. The sample included eight novels and four plays, half from each period. (For example, among those included were: "The Professor's House," "They Knew What They Wanted," "Herzog," and "Death of a Salesman.") Grounded theory, a research methodology which emphasizes theory discovery rather than theory verification, was used to study male mid-life and to uncover new insights. Emerging from the literature review were five major developmental categories and their characteristic properties. Major categories included aging awareness, meaning search, generation squeeze, career malaise, and ego rejuvenation. Comparative data analysis revealed that mid-life coping can be an uncomfortable, sometimes painful, endeavor. New insights discovered were related to what it means to be the middle of three generations, the importance of peer/spouse confirmation of one's aging, and the rejuvenation function of the mentor relationship. (CSS)

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COPING WITH MALE MID-LIFE: A SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS USING LITERATURE AS A DATA SOURCE

A Paper Presented at the Adult
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Sharan Merriam
Center for Adult Development
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, N.J. 08903

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COPING WITH MALE MID-LIFE: A SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS

USING LITERATURE AS A DATA SOURCE*

Introduction: Literature as a Data Source

Adult education and adult developmental psychology are complementary fields of study. The educational needs and interests of the adult to a large extent reflect different stages of psycho-social development. Understanding adult development can be an asset in planning adult educational experiences. Birren and Woodruff (1973) suggest that the goals of "educational intervention over the life span" are three-fold: alleviation of educational deprivation; enrichment, to stimulate interest in learning itself; and prevention of difficulties in adjusting to different stages of the life span. With these goals in mind, an in-depth knowledge "of the developmental tasks facing adults at various age levels would appear to provide a focus and a degree of relevancy to adult education" (p. 319). Knowledge and awareness of adult stages of life can thus provide a valuable resource for the adult educator in terms of diagnosing learning needs and designing educational activities.

Traditional sources for developing life cycle paradigms are clinical practices, biographies and autobiographies, surveys, and interviews. The relative recency of research in adulthood as well as the lack of clearly defined procedures for the study of adult development invites new and creative approaches to exploring the phases of adulthood.

Fictional literature would seem to be one rich source of data for acquiring knowledge about adult development. The link between literature and psychology has long been recognized:

> And what indeed is literature but a record of human behavior? And just that is also the definition given at the beginning of many a discourse on the subject matter of psychology....We interpret modern literature ...as being an attempt to get at real facts which may throw light upon human behavior. (Lindauer, 1974, p. 67)

Literature has a lasting and universal appeal because it speaks to the human condition. Whether literature is approached as art and read for enjoyment, or as knowledge and studied as a source of data, "the writer discovers and communicates facts and their meanings about human experience and behavior relevant to all men" (Lindauer, 1974, p. 82). Wellek and Warren (1942) in a discussion of the various functions of literature, note the value of literary works to psychologists as source books or case histories for when one considers the "very limited number of persons whose inner life and motivations we know"...

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*This paper is based upon a doctoral dissertation completed at Rutgers University, March 1978. A copy of the dissertation (at cost of reproduction and mailing) may be obtained by writing: Sharan Merriam, Center for Adult Development, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, 10 Seminary Place, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903

it is "the great service of the novel that it does reveal the introspective life of the character" (p. 23).

The potential usefulness of literature for illuminating stages of adult development invites systematic research. According to McKenzie (1975):

> Analysis of...literature can be a research modality for the simple reason that such research has the potential of making new information available. A large number of creative artists have much to say about adult development and learning. What they have to say is based on their experience, on exceptional perceptions of life, and on penetrating insights and profound intuitions. The author ..offers to the researcher a conceptual model of human development. (pp. 214-215)

While several writers have advocated the use of literature as a data source for generating new insights about adult development, the researcher was unable to locate any such systematic inquiry, with one possible exception. In The Interpretation of Dreams, first published in 1900, Sigmund Freud developed his theory of the Oedipus complex from an analysis of Sophocles' Oedipus Rex and Shakespeare's Hamlet. (Freud, 1961).

Literature has been most often used as an illustrative device. Kimmel (1974) for example, in a book on adult development, illustrates major ideas throughout his chapter on "Dying and Bereavement" with excerpts from a short story by Leo Tolstoy. And on occasion literature has been linked to adult development paradigms. Ricciardelli (1973) applied Cumming and Henry's disengagement theory to King Lear, for example. And using the alternate art form of film, Erik Erikson (1976) applied his model of adult development to Dr. Borg in Bergman's film "Wild Strawberries."

A desire to explore the usefulness of literature as a data source for studying adult development thus provided the impetus for this reserach investigation. The various stages of adulthood were considered in order to provide a focus for the study. Middle age was chosen for the following reasons: (1) it was of most interest to the researcher; 2) compared with othe other stages of adulthood, there has been less research done on middle age; 3) middle-aged adults comprise a large, influential segment of the adult population; implications for education based upon the study's findings could thus have a potentially significant impact.

An initial exploration of the research on middle age suggested a further limitation. Rather than studying both sexes or women, middle-aged men were chosen to be a focus of the study because: 1) the psychological literature suggests that women follow different developmental patterns and to include both males and females in the same study would present problems of interpretation; 2) empirical research, which formed a reference point for this study's findings, has focused primarily on men, and 3) fictional literature dealing with middle age has more often centered on male rather than female protagonists.

With middle-aged males as the focus, it was felt necessary to establish parameters with regard to the literary selections. To control for excessive variability in terms of language and cultural factors and to enhance the probability that findings would have relevant implications for contemporary acult educational programming, the study was limited to twentieth century American literary works. Within this framework literary works were selected from two different historical periods--post World War I and post World War II. This provided a data base broad enough to insure that findings would not be affected by particular conceptions of literary art. Using works from two different periods encompassing a fifty year time span also afforded the researcher an opportunity to determine whether characteristics of men in mid-life appear stable over time, or if there appeared to be historical differences in the dynamics of male middle age. More novels (four from each period) than plays (two from each period) were chosen because of the novel's greater potential for character development and analysis. Poetry, due to complexities of metaphorical interpretation, and autobiography, which is non-fiction and which often encompasses the entire life span, were two literary forms not included in this study.

The following criteria, suggested by McKenzie (1976), were used as guidelines in the selection of particular works: 1) that they posses literary merit; 2) that the works be relevant to the problem; 3) that the works be sufficient in length to derive adequate information; and 4) that the work be clearly written and unhampered by complex symbolism.

The actual selection of specific works was based on the researcher's own literary judgement and consultations with professors in the field of American literature. Seven college and university professors were asked to name fictional works of literary merit from the post World War I and post World War II eras in which the protagonist was a middle-aged male. Those works which were repeatedly listed as meeting the required criteria were selected for the study. They are:

Post World War I

Novels:

Cather, Willa. The Professor's House. (1925)

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. Tender is the Night. (1934)

Lewis, Sinclair. Babbitt. (1922)

Wolfe, Thomas. You Can't Go Home Again. (1940)

Plays:

Howard, Sidney. They Knew What They Wanted. (1924)

Rice, Elmer. The Adding Machine. (1923)

Post World War II

Novels:

Bellow, Saul. Herzog. (1964)

Heller, Joseph. Something Happened. (1975)

Marquand, John P. Point of No Return. (1949)

Updike, John. A Month of Sundays. (1975)

Plays:

Miller, Arthur. Death of a Salesman. (1949)

Williams, Tennessee. The Night of the Iguana. (1961)

Methodology

Rigorous methodological investigations of literature have been limited to content analysis in which the goals have been to determine "the reading ease of prose, comparing stylistic factors, settling authorship disputes, and understanding literature's intentions and effects on an audience" (Lindauer, 1974, p. 58). In order to investigate the viability of using literature as a data source for social science inquiry, it was felt that a systematic research methodology should be employed. Gounded theory, a research methodology which emphasizes theory discovery rather than theory verification, seemed to be particularly suited to an attempt to generate new insights about a particular period of adult development. By using the rigorous data analysis techniques of grounded theory research, this study sought to go beyond past efforts which have largely employed unsystematic and impressionistic approaches to the analysis of literary materials, and to provide a prototype of a disciplined investigation of literature for the purpose of studying adult development.

Grounded theory research, developed by sociologiests Glaser and Strauss (1967), emphasizes inductively generating theory which is "grounded" in the data rather than testing theory or merely describing empirical phenomena. Its value for investigating adult development has been underscored by Bernice Neugarten: "Perhaps the most useful studies in the immediate future will... be those that depend upon inductive approaches and methods of naturalistic observation rather than upon deductive and experimental approaches" (Neugarten, 1973, p. 327).

Theory, according to Glaser and Strauss, should provide a perspective on behavior and be useful for guiding future research. A theory is most useful if it is derived from the data which it purports to describe or explain. The theory will then "fit"--that is, the categories will be "readily (not forcibly) applicable to and, indicated by the data under study." It will also "work"--

that is, the categories will be "relevant to and be able to explain the behavior under study" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 3).

A conceptual scheme generated by grounded theory methods consists of several elements. A category is "a conceptual element of theory" and can stand by itself. Properties are aspects of the category which define or illuminate the category's meaning. Categories and properties are generated by the data and "have a life apart from the evidence that gave rise to them." Concepts according to Glaser and Strauss (1967)

> should be analytic--sufficiently generalized to designate characteristics of concrete entities, not the entities themselves. They should be sensitizing--yield a 'meaningful' picture, abetted by apt illustrations that enable one to grasp the reference in terms of one's own experience. (pp. 38-39)

A skeletal theory emerges as categories and properties are abstracted from the data and then related through the tentative formulation of hypotheses. In grounded theoy research, "hypotheses have at first the status of suggested, not tested, relations among categories and their properties, though they are verified as much as possible in the course of research" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 39).

The basic strategy in grounded theory research is the constant comparative method of data analysis. Categories, properties and hypotheses emergy simultaneously throughout the process of data collection, coding and analysis. There is no prescribed moment when the researcher stops one operation and begins another. Unlike other research methodologies, analysis begins immediately. The researcher moves back and forth between data and concepts emerging from the data to develop clues to the emerging theory and focus for further collection of data.

The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis can be applied to a variety of data sources. Glaser and Strauss argue that documentary materials--"letters, biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, speeches, novels and a multitude of nonfiction forms"--are potentially valuable for generating theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 161, 163). Since theory building rather than verification or description is the aim of grounded theory research, an open and flexible use of data sources is necessary and appropriate. What is most important is the emergent theory's explanatory and predictive powers. The nature of the underlying data source is important, but not to the same degree as in traditional descriptive or hypothesis-testing inquiry.

Insight, which is the source of "significant theorizing" can come from personal experiences as well as the experiences of others;

> The validity of this point is easy to grasp if one thinks of an interviewer beginning to theorize on the basis of insight gotten from an interviewee's words. The anthropologist also does this when he listens to

> informants. If we can do this with an interviewee or an informant why not with the author of an autobiography or a novel? What is more, the insider (interviewee, informant, novelist) may not give us the insight unwittingly; he may offer it intentionally, fully aware that he is doing so. If the researcher accepts that offer at face value, there is no sound methodological reason why he cannot begin to build, or further build, theory upon it. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 252-253)

The fact that literature as a data source resists the rigorously controlled manipulation of "harder" evidence does not preclude its value as a medium for research. Analysis of data, even that which is rigorously collected, suffers to some extent from conceptual and methodological shortcomings inherent in the particular research methodology employed. According to Lindauer (1974):

> Literature can be thought of as one of many sources of psychological information which vary in their degree of rigor and comprehensiveness. Literature's problems as a source of data, arising because it is an historical record of fiction by...authors who were more concerned with literary than scientific criteria, are balanced by its major advantage: it gives the insights of talented people about important problems. (p. 82)

The value of literature as a data source can be evaluated "only in terms of its fruitfulness...in light of the data, hypotheses and theories which will eventually emerge"(Lindauer, 1974, p. 177).

In summary, grounded theory research which emphasizes the inductive generation of theory from the data source seemed well-suited for a study of male mid-life in conjunction with literary materials. The data analysis techniques involved in the constant comparative method were applied to literary works in an attempt to uncover new insights into male mid-life.

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis were preceded by a cursory reading of the works in order to familiarize the researcher with the basic setting, plot, and characters. A close, detailed reading of each work was then undertaken.

In moving throughthe first novel, The Professor's House, any incident, dialogue, or statement made or thought by the protagonist or other characters which appeared to relate to middle age was underlined. A strong attempt was made to remain open and sensitive to what the data source might possibly generate. On a separate piece of paper, page number and the core of each underlined quote was recorded. Some fifty-two different page numbers and core quotes were noted under nine different possible categories such as appearance,

family, career, etc. After completing The Professor's House, a theoretical memo was typed in which the researcher noted generalities, ideas, strong themes having to do with being middle-aged.

This process of underlining and notetaking continued with the close reading of Babbitt, a difference being that the tentative categories generated by The Professor's House were kept in mind. Although looking for some verification of these categories in Babbitt, new categories and re-focusing of earlier categories were also sought. Over one hundred page numbers and core quotes were recorded and two new categories, "Introspection" and "Burdened by Responsibility" emerged. A memo was typed recording joint observations pertaining to Babbitt and the Professor. Such common experiences as an awareness of time, concern with physical aspects of aging and loss of interest in work were noted.

With the reading of successive literary works, verification and strengthening of earlier categories was sought while at the same time an attempt was made to avoid forcing new data to fit preconceived categories. Rather, each work, to the extent possible, was allowed to generate its own categories or headings.

As works were compared and contrasted with one another, themes began to emerge into which the data could be divided. Quotes from the works fell into' clusters with themes such as aging, family, work, and self. Each cluster of quotes was continually added to while at the same time analyzed by the researcher in an attempt to determine a pattern of categories and properties. As the relationships between categories and properties began to crystallize, earlier read works were returned to for verification.

After all twelve works were read and data recorded in this manner, all notes, recorded data, comparative and theoretical memos were reviewed. Extracted from the data were five major categories and their properties deemed characteristic of the male mid-life period of development. These categories, properties, and the twelve literary works were each assigned a number which could then be punched on McBee key sort cards.

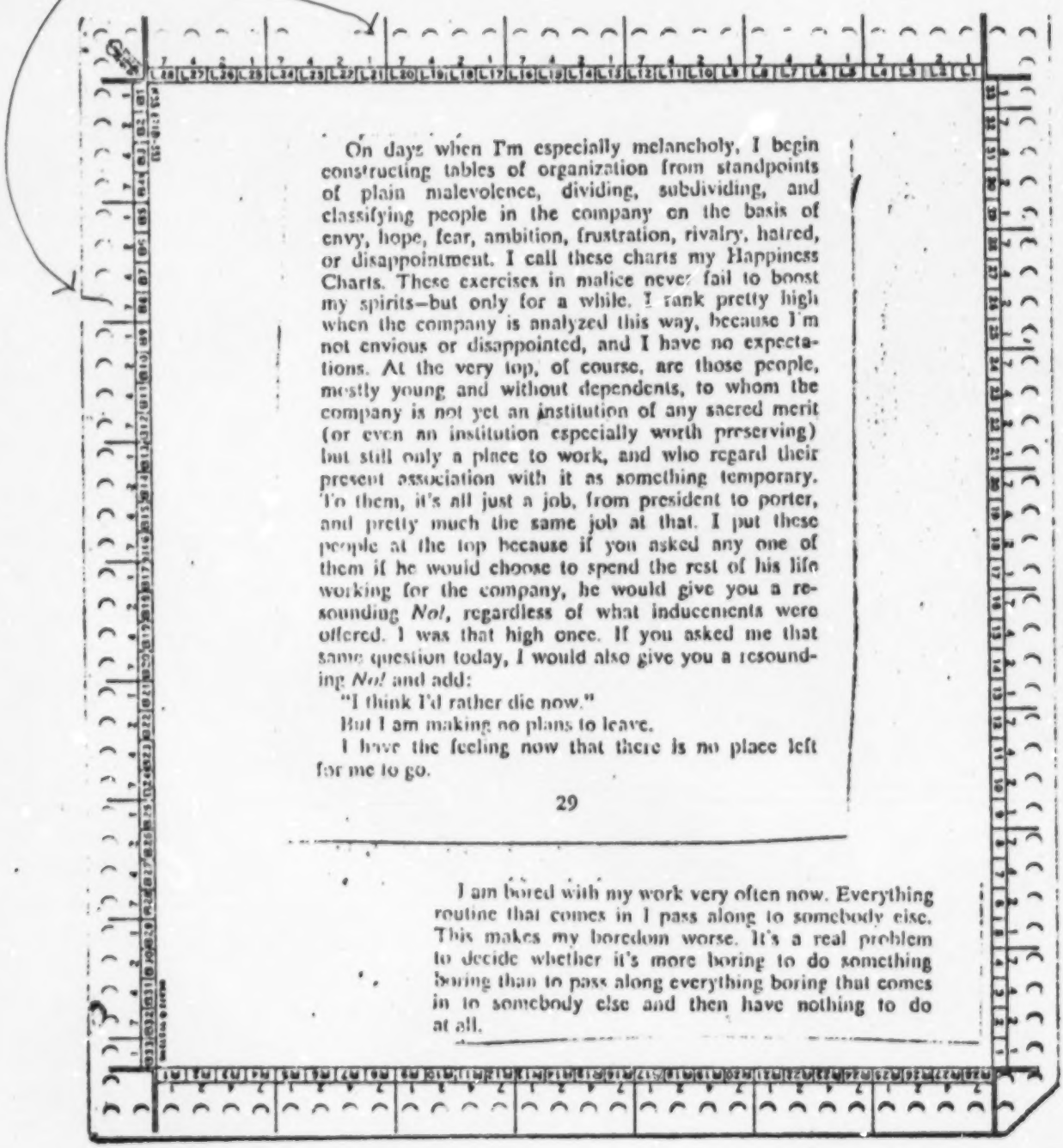
At this point a duplicate set of books was purchased. For each literary work, all underlined incidents in the original book were then cut out of the duplicate book and pasted ona McBee card (see page 8 for an example). In many instances, an episode or thought pasted on a card was punched for more than one category or property. This cross referencing generated thinking about the interrelatedness of the categories, Several tentative hypotheses emerged, as well as thoughts on the integration of the data into an overall theory of middle age. Such insights were recorded.

In summary, from the reading of the first book through the writing of the findings, an attempt was made to remain sensitive to the data source itself. The simultaneous collection and analysis of the data allowed for the emergence of categories and properties derived directly from the data. This cumulative process of theory building involved a simultaneous examination of evidence with the formulation of concepts and tentative hypotheses. Through the constant comparative method, each new piece of data served to confirm or modify elements of the emerging theory.

SAMPLE MCBEE KEY SORT CARD

Coded and Punched for:

B6 - Something Happened
L21 - Career Malaise
L22 - trapped
L23 - bored



On days when I'm especially melancholy, I begin constructing tables of organization from standpoints of plain malevolence, dividing, subdividing, and classifying people in the company on the basis of envy, hope, fear, ambition, frustration, rivalry, hatred, or disappointment. I call these charts my Happiness Charts. These exercises in malice never fail to boost my spirits—but only for a while. I rank pretty high when the company is analyzed this way, because I'm not envious or disappointed, and I have no expectations. At the very top, of course, are those people, mostly young and without dependents, to whom the company is not yet an institution of any sacred merit (or even an institution especially worth preserving) but still only a place to work, and who regard their present association with it as something temporary. To them, it's all just a job, from president to porter, and pretty much the same job at that. I put these people at the top because if you asked any one of them if he would choose to spend the rest of his life working for the company, he would give you a resounding *No!*, regardless of what inducements were offered. I was that high once. If you asked me that same question today, I would also give you a resounding *No!* and add:

"I think I'd rather die now."

But I am making no plans to leave.

I have the feeling now that there is no place left for me to go.

29

I am bored with my work very often now. Everything routine that comes in I pass along to somebody else. This makes my boredom worse. It's a real problem to decide whether it's more boring to do something boring than to pass along everything boring that comes in to somebody else and then have nothing to do at all.

Findings

The findings of this study suggest that coping with middle age can be an uncomfortable, and at times, painful endeavor. As with other stages of human development, the salient issues of mid-life must be dealt with in order for there to be continued growth and development. In varying degrees, the lives of these twelve protagonists become fragmented as each pauses to scrutinize his career, his family, and himself. This period of fragmentation in w which the segments of one's life are analyzed, criticized and evaluated, is followed by a restructuring, putting the puzzle pieces of one's life back together. Restructuring, when it occurs, allows the middle-aged person to' move on in life, to continue to grow and develop.

While the challenges of other stages of human development might also generate conflict necessitating a resolution, middle age can be differentiated from other life stages by its own distinctive psycho-social events. Fragmentation-restructuring is a broad conceptual framework within which the dynamics of middle age can be viewed. Fragmentation is best thought of as a continuum. Some protagonists experience intense distress and conflict as they attempt to cope with middle age; for others, the process is less traumatic. Common to all protagonists, however, are the issues of mid-life which must be confronted. In this study, five major categories descriptive of middle age emerged from a comparative analysis of the data. The distribution of the categories and properties in the literary works are presented on page 10. Following is a very brief description of each category.

The Awareness of Aging: The data from this study strongly affirm that a growing awareness of one's own aging is a major concern for those in mid-life. Unlike a young person who is future oriented, whose life stretches ahead almost indefinitely, the middle-aged man begins to realize that his life is finite. He becomes aware of his physical aging, an irreversible process, which, he realizes, leaves him left with a limited number of years.

The awareness of aging is characterized by a reordered time perspective. Men begin to view their lives in terms of the time they have left to live, rather than the number of years since birth. Bob Slocum in Something Happened (Heller, 1975, p. 318) graphically describes this shift in time with an analysis of his sleeping position: "In my middle years, I have exchanged the position of the fetus for the position of the corpse."

A second property, concern with physical aging, heightens the protagonists' awareness of aging. This concern with physical deterioration is confirmed by spouses and/or peers, a third property of the category. Finally, the awareness of aging is also characterized by intimations of mortality. No longer does the future spread out indefinitely before the protagonists as it did in young adulthood. Some men fear death, some accept it, and others vow to fight it.

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF THE CATEGORIES AND PROPERTIES IN THE LITERARY WORKS

	AWARENESS OF AGING				SEARCH FOR MEANING		GENERATION SQUEEZE			CAREER MALAISE			EGO REJUVE-NATION		TOTALS
	Reord Time Persp	Conc. Phys. Deter.	Intim. of Mort.	Peer/ Spouse Conf.	Quest. of Life	Los. Bear.	Oppr. Resp.	Bipol. Proj.	Par. Press.	Bore-dom	Iner-tia	Feels Trap.	Mentor Rela.	Sex Activ.	
1. THE PROFESSOR'S HOUSE (Godfrey St. Peter)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X		10
2. TENDER IS THE NIGHT (Dick Diver)	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	11
3. BABBITT (George Babbitt)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	13
4. YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN (George Webber)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X		11
5. THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED (Tony)		X											X	X	3
6. THE ADDING MACHINE (Mr. Zero)	X	X		X	X	X				X		X		X	8
7. HERZOG (Moses Herzog)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	11
8. SOMETHING HAPPENED (Bob Slocum)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	12
9. POINT OF NO RETURN (Charles Grey)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X		9
10. A MONTH OF SUNDAYS (Tom Marshfield)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	14
11. DEATH OF A SALESMAN (Willy Loman)		X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	9
12. THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA (Shannon)	X	X		X	X	X		X	X		X			X	9
TOTALS	10	12	7	11	11	11	9	8	7	5	8	5	7	9	

Search for Meaning: The realization that one is half way through life catapults the protagonists into a search for meaning, a second category uncovered in this study. Everything in the protagonists' lives comes under review. Identifying anchors of family, career and self no longer seeem relevant. The returns on an investment of forty or so years of living are found to be elusive. One property characteristic of the mid-life search for meaning is an intense questioning of life in general and one's own life in particular. The questioning of life leads the men into feeling that they are losing their bearings, the second property of the search for meaning.

The Generation Squeeze: The fragmentation each protagonist experiences as he attempts to cope with middle age is exacerbated by the problems associated with being the middle of three generations. As Tom Marshfield aptly expresses it in A Month of Sundays (Updike, 1975, p. 145), "Heredity...worked up as well as down." Weaving in and out of the labyrinth of intimate relationships to spouse, parents and children, the mid-life male feels burdened by having to offer emotional succor and financial support to more people than at any other stage of life. The protagonists feel "squeezed" from both ends of the life span. Being responsible for both the older generation, their parents, and the younger generation, their children, is a burden most would like to escape. Thus the property of oppressive responsibility helps to illuminate the nature of the category, generation squeeze.

The second property of the generation squeeze is bipolar projection. Projecting themselves into the position of their aging parents, the men see what they do not want to become. And projecting themselves towards their youthful offspring, they mourn the loss of vitality and youthful promise. Finally, the pressure, real or imagined, which a mother or father exerts upon the protagonists is the third property of the category generation squeeze.

Career Malaise: In this study, it appears that even for those who judge themselves as successful, a mid-life career malaise dimishes feelings of fulfillment. Some of the men are bored with their jobs, some are so preoccupied coping with their age-related problems that they are temporarily unable to function in their work, and others feel trapped, too old to make a career change. The properties of "boredom", "inertia" and "trapped", capture the essence of the category, career malaise, as experienced by the twelve protagonists.

Ego Rejuvenation: The fragmentation of mid-life can be a lonely and painful process. The loss of bearings which occurs in the search for meaning, the dynamics of the generation squeeze, the inertia related to a career diagnosis and the awareness of aging itself result in the protagonists' need to revitalize their lives. For these men, the desire to remain youthful manifests itself in at least two ways--through the mentor relationship and through sexual activity. Middle-aged men are in a unique position to be mentors. By mid-life most have achieved, through experience, the status and power younger men aspire to. Rarely, if ever, is a young person a mentor, and herein lies the dilemma for middle-aged men: one cannot be both young and yet have accumulated the years of experience necessary to offer guidance to others. Assuming the role of mentor to a younger man allows for the middle-aged man to operate from

a coveted position of authority, while at the same time vicariously reliving young adulthood. Sexual activity, the second property of ego rejuvenation, is yet another hedge on aging.

The middle-age categories and properties identified in this study, though presently individually, are in reality interactive and interrelated. The particular configuration and interrelatedness of these factors create varying amounts of stress upon the protagonists. Some find coping with their aging to be relatively easy; for others, the fragmentation they experience is devasting. Consequently, some are able to restructure their lives, allowing for continued growth and development; while others fail to come to terms with the tasks of mid-life. (The integration of categories and properties, as well as the protagonists' approaches to restructuring are fully explored in the dissertation.)

Conclusion

A comparison of this study's findings with psycho-social research attested to the fact that literature can confirm existing knowledge as well as generate new insights. Of the five major categories, elements of three--awareness of aging, the search for meaning and career malaise--are well documented by empirically-based studies on middle age. The systematic analysis of literature also uncovered some new insights. Specifically, sensitizing and explanatory insights emerged with regard to:

1) what it means to be the middle of three generations
2) the importance of peer/spouse confirmation of one's aging
3) the rejuvenation function of the mentor relationship.

It could be argued, in fact, that the new findings were discovered perhaps because of the use of literature as a data source. That is, the protagonists of this study were seen by the researcher within the full context of their lives. Being able to observe their interaction with family members, friends and co-workers provided a rich scenario of interpersonal relationships from which new insights could be extracted.

Some further observations can be made with regard to the use of literature as a data source. Literature, as an artistic and creative expression of an aspect of the human condition, provides a researcher with vivid data for first generating, and then illustrating the elements of an inductive theory. In this particular study, there was no significant difference between the two time periods with regard to the richness of the works for generating insights into male middle age. Literary genre did make a difference, however, with novels proving to be almost twice as helpful as plays.

In conclusion, while recognizing that the fictional works dealt with the more problematic dimension of mid-life, literature, in conjunction with grounded theory research techniques, did prove to be a rich source of data for uncovering insights into a period of adult development. Such findings can at least provide a starting point for adult educators in planning meaningful educational experiences for this segment of the population.

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